.36/2:3/3/ HISTORY OF UNITED STATES **POSTAGE STAMPS POSTAL CARDS** AND STAMPED ENVELOPES Pl 3 U.S. MAIL

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The Special Assistant to the Postmaster General Post Office Department Washington, D.C. 20260

**Issued January 1970** 

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THE USE of adhesive postage stamps to indicate prepayment of postage on mail matter in 1847 was a milestone in the Postal Service of the United States. These stamps, by law, were issued to postmasters for sale to the public, thus assuring an accurate and automatic check on postage revenues.

Before the issuance of these stamps, letters accepted by postmasters for dispatch were marked "Paid" by means of pen and ink or hand stamps of various designs, with the town postmark and date of mailing usually noted. Some postmasters, between 1843 and 1847, provided special stamps or devices of local origin for use on letters as prepayment of postage. These are known as "Postmasters' Provisionals," and are generally quite rare.

Mailings without stamps affixed continued to be legal until prepayment of postage by stamps of governmental issue was made obligatory on January 1, 1856.

The first issue of stamps in 1847 consisted of a 5-cent stamp bearing the likeness of Benjamin Franklin and a 10-cent stamp bearing the portrait of George Washington. Stamp designs have since been revised many times, including subject material for the denominations needed to meet changing mailing requirements.

Portraits of former Presidents and other prominent Americans have been largely used as the subjects of regular stamps. In the series of 1954–61, noted shrines are also portrayed, including Mount Vernon, the Alamo, Bunker Hill, Independence Hall, Monticello, The Hermitage, the Statue of Liberty, and the Palace of the Governors, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Under the law, Title 39, U.S.C., Sec. 2501, the Postmaster General has full authority to issue postage stamps. A Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee assists the Post Office Department in the selection of subject matter, design and production of postage stamps. The criteria established by this Committee are used in determining their recommendations for new stamps.

Letters requesting commemorative stamps originate with individuals and organizations, and should be sent directly to the Postmaster General. After careful review of requests, the Stamp Advisory Committee makes recommendations for new stamps to the Postmaster General for his consideration.

## FIVE MAJOR DIVISIONS

United States postage stamps are divided into five groups: regular (ordinary) stamps in denominations from 1-cent to \$5, kept in constant supply at post offices; memorial stamps, issued infrequently to honor an American statesman (usually a President) who dies in office; airmail stamps, for use on domestic and international airmail matter; special stamps, used to prepay fees for special services other than regular or airmail postage; and commemorative stamps honoring events and persons associated with the development and ideals of the Nation.

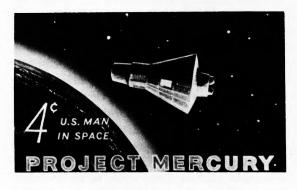
The first set of commemorative stamps, the Columbian Series, was issued to honor the

World's Fair in Chicago in 1893.

The original "Famous Americans" series of 35 postage stamps bearing portraits of famous artists, authors, composers, educators, inventors, poets and scientists, issued in 1940, represents the most extensive single set of postage stamps authorized to date. Since that time other stamps in the series have been issued, including the Thomas A. Edison, George Washington Carver, William Allen White, Harlan Fiske Stone, Will Rogers, Joel Chandler Harris, Edgar Allan Poe, Samuel Gompers, George Eastman, Andrew W. Mellon, Noah Webster, Dr. Ephraim McDowell, Andrew Carnegie, and Horace Greeley.

A series of special postage stamps honoring heroes of other nations called the "Champions of Liberty" series was inaugurated on August 31, 1957, with a stamp honoring Ramon Magsaysay. Other "Champions of Liberty" stamps have honored Simon Bolivar, Lajos Kossuth, Jose de San Martin, Ernst Reuter, Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, Ignace Jan Paderewski, Gustaf Mannerheim, Giuseppe Garibaldi and Mahatma Gandhi.

The Fort Sumter commemorative stamp, the first of the series of five marking the Civil War Centennial observance, was issued on April 12, 1961. Other stamps in the series are the Battle of Shiloh (April 7, 1962); Gettysburg (July 1, 1963); The Wilderness (May 5, 1964); and Appomattox (April 9, 1965).



On February 20, 1962, the Post Office Department signaled the first orbital flight of a United States astronaut by the issuance of the 4-cent Project Mercury commemorative stamp. the first time in history that an unannounced United States commemorative stamp was issued simultaneously with the event it memorialized. Designed and printed under tight security precautions, the stamp was distributed well in advance of the flight to more than 300 large postal installations, where it was held intact until the flight was completed. A total of 310 million of these stamps was issued to meet the unprecedented demand, and 3 million first day covers were canceled "Cape Canaveral, Fla., 3:30 P.M., Feb. 20, 1962." Provision was made for collectors to purchase these first day covers through the Philatelic Sales Agency, Washington, D.C.,

for a limited time, since they could not be obtained in the regular manner.

When a new postage stamp is approved for issuance, request is made of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to prepare a model for the proposed stamp, following such suggestions as the Post Office Department may furnish. On some occasions outstanding American artists, such as Norman Rockwell, Stevan Dohanos, Robert Geissmann and Alfred Charles Parker, have designed United States postage stamps.

A trained designer prepares a model for consideration. Additional models may be called for until one is found to be satisfactory. The accepted model is approved by the Postmaster General and returned to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing for the engraving of the master die. This consists of cutting the design into a piece of soft steel from which completed prints, known as die proofs, are pulled in various colors and presented to the Postmaster General for final approval of the design and color of ink to be used in the printing. After approval of the die proof, the master die is hardened by heating to a temperature of 1440 degrees (Fahrenheit) in a cyanide solution, from seven to ten minutes, followed by immersion in a brine bath. hardened master die is impressed on a soft steel roll which, after hardening in the same manner as the master die, is used in transferring the design to the steel plate employed in the printing of the stamp. The plates are hardened by being heated for about 36 minutes at 1550 degrees and immersed in oil.

## MODERNIZATION PROGRAM

Although certain stamps are printed on rotary sheet-fed presses using pregummed paper, most stamps are printed on rotary web presses equipped with two curved steel intaglio plates. Dextrin gum is applied as the adhesive in a continuous printing-gumming and drying operation. The stamps are perforated in a later operation.

In recent years the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, Treasury Department, which prints all United States postage stamps, has been modernized. New presses have been developed capable of printing at speeds more than three times that possible on the old presses. New inks had to be developed before the new presses could be placed in production. Subsequently, special devices have been affixed to the presses to test the gum thickness.

The Bureau's rotary presses print most sheet and booklet stamps from plates which have 400 subjects. Commemorative stamps are generally printed from plates with 200 subjects to the plate. Coil stamps are printed 432 stamps on each plate.

Machines developed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing are used to perforate the stamps. Register marks, engraved on the printing plates, provide for automatic control, and appear on the sheets of stamps in form of dashes. These dashes are scanned by photoelectric cells and a highly sensitive mechanism, which control the position of the perforations on the printed web.

Improved machinery to process stamps in sheet, booklet, and coil form has also been developed. The packaging of sheets of stamps is now accomplished on a new automatic wrapping machine which protects the stamps and provides less expensive handling.

New coiling machinery has been developed enabling the operator at one machine to scan the printed web and reject imperfect stamps. A second machine perforates the web, cuts it into strips, winds the stamps in coils, and wraps the coils in transparent material (continuous, inline process).

The Bureau uses three Giori sheet-fed rotary intaglio presses for production of multicolor postage stamps. These presses print three colors with one pass through the press, using three different ink fountains and ink distributing systems, and three inking-in rollers, rotating in synchronization with a single printing plate.

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing has placed a new nine-color press in operation. The first stamp produced was the special 1968 Christmas issue. The new press, the most advanced stamp press in the world, prints up to nine separate colors, applies gum, perforates and cuts the endless web of paper into sheets.

For perforating stamps printed on the Giori presses, the Bureau uses an L-type perforator. Sheets are automatically fed into the machine, perforated in both directions, and delivered at output end in a neat pile.

A tremendous quantity of adhesive postage stamps is required each year to meet the requirements of the public, reaching a total of over 34 billion stamps in fiscal year 1968 with a face value of over \$2 billion.

## POSTAL CARDS AND STAMPED ENVELOPES

Regular type one-color Government postal cards, first issued May 1, 1873, are now manufactured at the Government Printing Office in Washington, D.C., by means of high-speed rotary web presses with a capacity of 250,000 completed cards an hour. Approximately 4,200 tons of paper are consumed in printing the yearly supply of approximately 1½ billion postal cards required for issuance to the Postal Service. Two-color air mail and two-, three-, and four-color commemorative postal cards are also manufactured at the Government Printing Office by means of two-color sheet-fed offset presses.

Stamped envelopes were first issued in June 1853 and are, by law, manufactured for the Department under private contract, let to the lowest bidder for a term of 4 years. To produce the vast quantity of stamped envelopes required yearly, an extensive plant filled with specialized machinery is maintained in Williamsburg, Pa., with a force of approximately 200 trained employees. The largest number of stamped envelopes manufactured in a single day was 19,168,-

000 on July 29, 1932, when the contractor was working at full speed to produce the large quantity of 3-cent envelopes needed for initial distribution to post offices throughout the country to conform to the new rate effective July 6, 1932.

Envelopes bearing the purchaser's printed return card were authorized by law in 1865. The average yearly issues of stamped envelopes are in excess of 2 billion, having a sale value of about \$80 million.

Stamped envelopes are issued in a number of sizes and styles, including the window type, to meet the general requirements of the public. Envelopes with distinctive red, white, and blue borders have been provided for airmail letters. The colored border enables the postal employees more readily to detect airmail letters when mixed with other mail.

## STAMP PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

A 248 page book, "Postage Stamps of the United States 1847–1967," describing and illustrating United States postage stamps, is available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. The price of the book in paper cover is \$1.25.

Subscriptions to posters illustrating each new United States stamp are available from the Superintendent of Documents for \$1.50 per year



International Cooperation Year - United Nations commemorative stamp, issued June 26, 1965



Herbert Hoover commemorative stamp, issued August 10, 1965



John Singleton Copley "American Painting" commemorative stamp, issued September 17, 1965

5c u. s. postage



Christmas (regular) stamp, issued November 2, 1965



Abraham Lincoln (regular) "Prominent American" stamp, issued November 19, 1965



Migratory Bird Treaty commemorative stamp, issued March 16, 1966



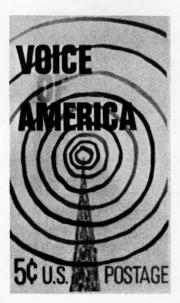
Servicemen-Savings Bonds commemorative stamp, issued October 26, 1966



Christmas (regular) stamp, issued November 1, 1966



20-cent International Air Mail stamp, issued April 26, 1967



Voice of America commemorative stamp, issued
August 1, 1967



Twin Space commemorative stamps, issued September 29, 1967



American Flag (regular) stamp, issued January 24, 1968



\$1.00 Airlift stamp, issued April 4, 1968



50th Anniversary U.S. Air Mail Service commemorative stamp, issued May 15, 1968



FIRST MAN ON THE MOON

Moon Landing air mail commemorative stamp, issued September 9, 1969



Dwight D. Eisenhower commemorative stamp, issued October 14, 1969

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE:1970-O-373-773

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